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Now Playing: Your Home Video

By SCOTT KIRSNER

Captain Jack is an atypical movie star. A blind Chihuahua rescued from a shelter, he does not have a B-list celebrity owner or a craving for tacos. And he can be a bit cantankerous, according to his companion, Deborah Tallent. "He didn't like me at first, until I gave him a piece of chicken," she said.

But on the Internet, Jack is one well-known dog, the star of a minor motion picture called "Capt. Jack: The Movie." It's available on ClipShack, one of a new generation of video-sharing sites that offer camcorder Coppolas and cellphone Scorseses a place to upload videos and make them available to friends, family members and the world at large.

Users of the sites, like Ms. Tallent, say that they offer a simpler alternative to sending large video files by e-mail, burning them onto a DVD or posting them on a personal Web site. And, if users opt to make their videos publicly available, they can be viewed - and commented on - by a wider audience.

The entrepreneurs who have started companies like ClipShack, Vimeo, YouTube and Blip.tv are betting that as consumers discover the video abilities built into their cellphones and digital still cameras, and get better at editing the often-lengthy video from their camcorders, they will be eager to share video on the Web. While most of the services are free today, the entrepreneurs eventually hope to make money by selling ads or charging fees for premium levels of service.

Sharing video on the Web is still a new notion. "A lot of people haven't really come to terms with the idea that they can publish their own video online," said Jakob Lodwick, the founder of Vimeo, based in Manhattan. "For the longest time, video has always been connected to a physical tape or a disc. There are still a lot of people who aren't even comfortable sharing their photos online yet."

But many early users of video-sharing services have encountered frustrations with other means of distribution. Ms. Tallent, who lives in Marina del Rey, Calif., said she had tried posting videos directly on her personal Web site, but that was cumbersome, and she ran afoul of her Internet provider's limits on file size.

Paul Krikler, who works for an investment bank in Manhattan, got tired of creating DVD's for his family members so they could enjoy videos of Mr. Krikler's 10-month-old son, Benjamin, chortling at the camera or being fed.

"Making DVD's would've been a less frequent process," Mr. Krikler said. Using ClipShack, "I can put up a couple new clips on a Saturday or Sunday every week, and people can go in and see new clips on a Monday."

Mr. Krikler chooses to allow only his circle of friends and family to view his videos, and says there are about 50 people in that group, including one friend in Australia. He shoots the videos using a digital camera from Canon that is designed mainly to take still pictures, and sends the videos to ClipShack.

Users of the services can upload *cinéma vérité* directly from the camera, or painstakingly edit the videos using software like iMovie from Apple or Windows Movie Maker from Microsoft. Some services, like Phanfare, charge a monthly fee, and most, with the exception of Google Video, limit the size of videos.

None of the sites should be considered a reliable sole archive for personal video, however, since many do not allow users to download their original file once it has been uploaded. And there is always the possibility that a site may vanish overnight.

At least two sites, Blip.tv and OurMedia.org, promise more permanence by uploading a copy of each video submitted to the Internet Archive, which is run by a San Francisco nonprofit organization whose mission is long-term preservation of digital material.

Graham Walker, who posts his travel videos to OurMedia.org, views that as a benefit. Some of his videos made during a trip to Tibet capture the changes in that country as China exerts a greater impact on its culture. "With your video in the Internet Archive, you feel that you're leaving something for the future," said Mr. Walker, a video producer who lives in Prague.

"Of course, some people may not want that," he added. "Do you really want your new girlfriend to find all the videos you made when you were with your old girlfriend?"

Some video sharers simply want to make their latest clips accessible to a defined group of family members and friends, but others relish making

their work public and the serendipity of allowing those who come across it to share their reactions. (Some enjoy both aspects of the services.) Vimeo can even send a user an e-mail or text message when someone else has posted a new comment about his video.

One of Andrew Long's videos on that site, "sugar rush," has been viewed nearly 2,500 times and has inspired 21 comments. (A typical one: "the first few seconds were the awesomest.") It features a friend of Mr. Long's stuffing blue cotton candy into her mouth on a visit to Coney Island. Mr. Long appreciates the social aspect of publishing his video on Vimeo. "I like being able to see what my friends shoot, and comment on it, and have them comment on my stuff," he said. "It's really gratifying."

Since many of the video-sharing sites have not yet established their business models, some users worry what will happen if their favorite site starts charging, or begins placing ads on its pages before the videos themselves. "I'm not against having a commercial on my video," says Schlomo Rabinowitz, a San Francisco bar owner who posts videos using Blip.tv. "But I'm against having just any commercial on it. I would want to have a say, and get some of the money." One of his recent videos chronicles a trip by private plane to a restaurant in Coalinga, Calif., to a try steak house that raises and slaughters its own beef.

None of the major photo-sharing sites, like Snapfish and the [Kodak](#) EasyShare Gallery, permit users to upload videos. "Too bad for them," said Cynthia Francis, a founder of ClipShack. Her site allows users to upload either type of media, and Mr. Krikler, a ClipShack user who had been using Snapfish for his still photos, plans to start using ClipShack for both photos and video soon.

Some believe that the video-sharing moment has not yet arrived. Jeff Hastings, general manager of [Pinnacle Systems](#), which makes video-editing software for PC users, says his company's internal research shows that most mainstream users still prefer to save their videos on DVD's. While an earlier version of Pinnacle's Studio software had a feature that allowed users to upload finished videos to a Web site run by the company, that video-sharing feature has vanished from the latest version, Studio 10.

Others, though, are already looking ahead to the next wave of enhancements to online video-sharing sites. One possibility is allowing a user to weave together snippets of video taken at the same event by different people, producing a "master" version of homecoming weekend, for instance. Another idea is creating a queue of interesting video clips that can be watched on a television, said Ms. Francis, perhaps on a [TiVo](#)-like set-top box.

The future may also hold a sequel to "Capt. Jack: The Movie," which has been viewed 41 times so far on ClipShack. "He's doing great," Ms. Tallent said of her dog. "He has become somewhat of a local celebrity." Next time around, though, the Captain may demand his own trailer and a share of box-office revenues.

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